



Traffic Safety Facts 2003

Older Population



There are 26 million people age 70 years and older in the United States. In 2003, this age group made up 9.0 percent of the total U.S. resident population, compared with 8.8 percent in 1993. From 1993 to 2003, the growth rate for this older segment of the population was 15 percent higher than the growth rate of the total population.

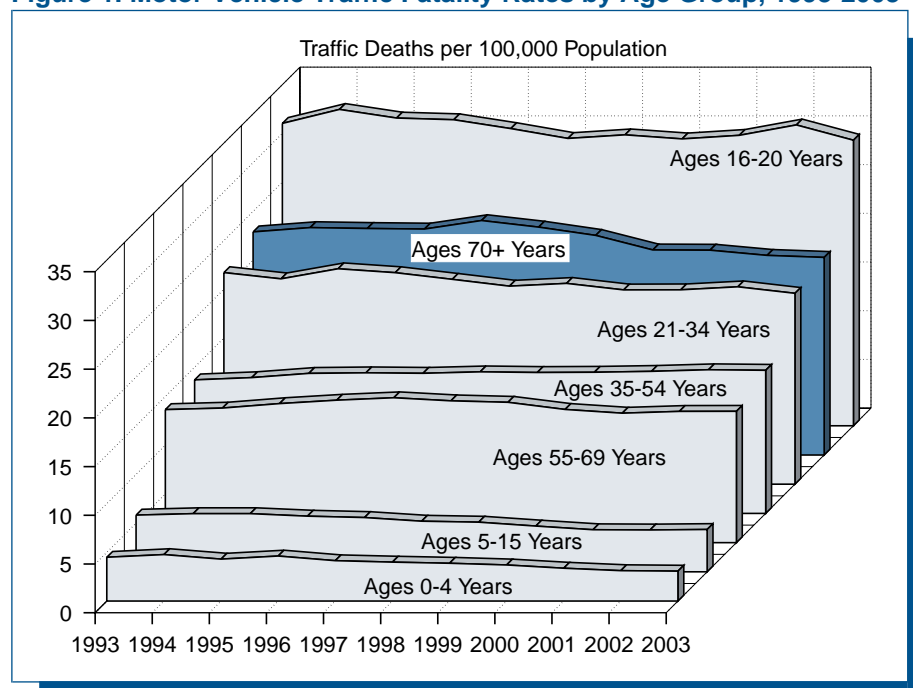
There were 19.9 million older licensed drivers in 2002 (2003 data not available) — a 29 percent increase from the number in 1992. In contrast, the total number of licensed drivers increased by only 12 percent from 1992 to 2002. Older drivers made up 10 percent of all licensed drivers in 2002, compared with 9 percent in 1992.

In 2003, 145,000 older individuals were injured in traffic crashes, accounting for 5 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year. These older individuals made up 12 percent of all traffic fatalities, 12 percent of all vehicle occupant fatalities, and 16 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.

Most traffic fatalities involving older drivers in 2003 occurred during the daytime (82 percent), on weekdays (71 percent), and involved another vehicle (74 percent).

“In 2003, older people accounted for 12 percent of all traffic fatalities and 16 percent of all pedestrian fatalities.”

Figure 1. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates by Age Group, 1993-2003



Older drivers involved in fatal crashes had the lowest proportion of total drivers involved with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of 0.08 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or higher of all adult drivers. Fatally injured older pedestrians also had the lowest proportion with BAC 0.08 g/dl or higher of all adult pedestrian fatalities.

Table 1. Age and Alcohol, 2003

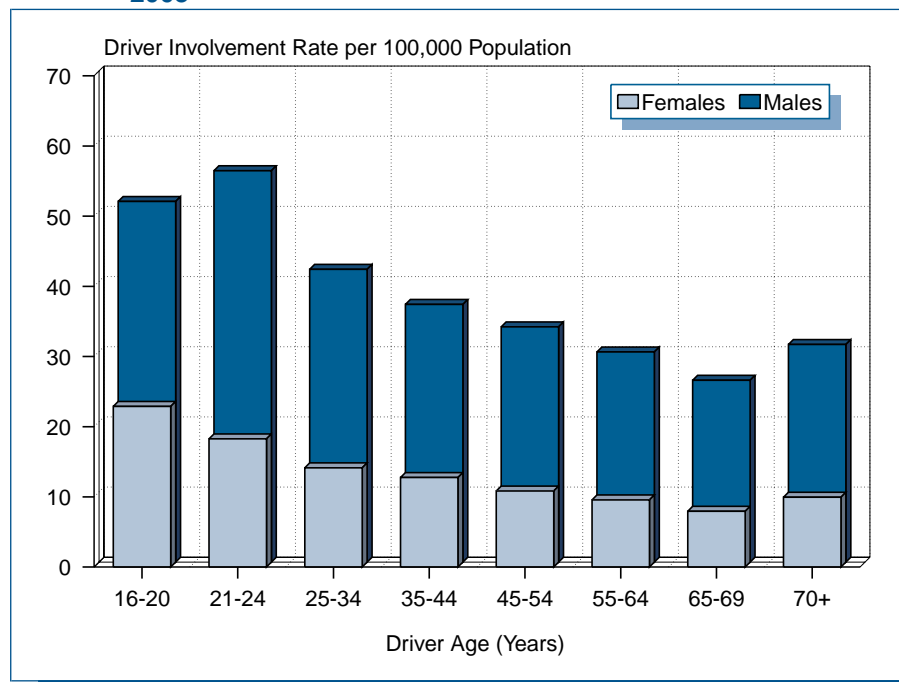
| Age Group (years) | Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes | | | Pedestrian Fatalities | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | Total | BAC 0.08 or Higher | | Total | BAC 0.08 or Higher | |
| | | Number | Percent of Total | | Number | Percent of Total |
| <16 | 342 | 35 | 10 | 443 | 13 | 3 |
| 16–20 | 7,693 | 1,446 | 19 | 298 | 86 | 29 |
| 21–34 | 17,452 | 4,993 | 29 | 828 | 412 | 50 |
| 35–54 | 19,939 | 4,307 | 22 | 1,621 | 795 | 49 |
| 55–69 | 6,995 | 769 | 11 | 743 | 198 | 27 |
| 70+ | 4,800 | 258 | 5 | 773 | 60 | 8 |
| Total | *58,156 | 11,996 | 21 | **4,749 | 1,579 | 33 |

*Includes 935 drivers of unknown age.

**Includes 43 pedestrian fatalities of unknown age.

“Older drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2003 had the lowest proportion of intoxication of all adult drivers.”

Figure 2. Driver Involvement Rates in Fatal Crashes by Age and Sex, 2003



“In two-vehicle fatal crashes with an older and a younger driver, the older driver’s vehicle was twice as likely to be the one that was struck.”

Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of all older occupants of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were using restraints at the time of the crash, compared to 61 percent for other adult occupants (18 to 69 years old).

For older people, 65 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2003 occurred at non-intersection locations. For other pedestrians, 81 percent of fatalities occurred at non-intersection locations. In two-vehicle fatal crashes involving an older driver and a younger driver, the vehicle driven by the older person was twice as likely to be the one that was struck (63 percent and 31 percent, respectively). In 44 percent of these crashes, both vehicles were proceeding straight at the time of the collision. In 27 percent, the older driver was turning left — 7 times as often as the younger driver.

Table 2. Involvement of the Older Population in Traffic Fatalities, 1993 and 2003

| | 1993 | | | 2003 | | | Percentage Change, 1993-2003 | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|---------|---------|------------------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Total | Age 70+ | Percent of Total | Total | Age 70+ | Percent of Total | Number | | Percent Age 70+ |
| | | | | | | | Total | Age 70+ | |
| Population (thousands) | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 257,783 | 22,801 | 8.8 | 290,810 | 26,173 | 9.0 | +13% | +15% | +2% |
| Male | 125,788 | 8,801 | 7.0 | 143,037 | 10,423 | 7.3 | +14% | +18% | +4% |
| Female | 131,995 | 14,000 | 10.6 | 147,773 | 15,750 | 10.7 | +12% | +13% | +1% |
| Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 53,401 | 4,260 | 8.0 | 58,156 | 4,800 | 8.3 | +9% | +13% | +4% |
| Male | 39,556 | 2,949 | 7.5 | 42,314 | 3,233 | 7.6 | +7% | +10% | +1% |
| Female | 13,082 | 1,311 | 10.0 | 15,091 | 1,567 | 10.4 | +15% | +20% | +4% |
| Driver Fatalities | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 23,142 | 2,784 | 12.0 | 26,640 | 3,205 | 12.0 | +15% | +15% | 0% |
| Male | 17,302 | 1,913 | 11.1 | 19,855 | 2,105 | 10.6 | +15% | +10% | -5% |
| Female | 5,839 | 871 | 14.9 | 6,780 | 1,100 | 16.2 | +16% | +26% | +9% |
| Total Traffic Fatalities | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 40,150 | 5,221 | 13.0 | 42,643 | 5,309 | 12.4 | +6% | +2% | -5% |
| Male | 27,322 | 2,889 | 10.6 | 29,188 | 2,929 | 10.0 | +7% | +1% | -6% |
| Female | 12,814 | 2,331 | 18.2 | 13,445 | 2,380 | 17.7 | +5% | +2% | -3% |
| Occupant Fatalities | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 33,574 | 4,167 | 12.4 | 37,132 | 4,483 | 12.1 | +11% | +8% | -2% |
| Male | 22,606 | 2,285 | 10.1 | 25,293 | 2,458 | 9.7 | +12% | +8% | -4% |
| Female | 10,956 | 1,881 | 17.2 | 11,831 | 2,025 | 17.1 | +8% | +8% | -1% |
| Pedestrian Fatalities | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 5,649 | 1,012 | 17.9 | 4,749 | 773 | 16.3 | -16% | -24% | -9% |
| Male | 3,936 | 565 | 14.4 | 3,254 | 427 | 13.1 | -17% | -24% | -9% |
| Female | 1,711 | 447 | 26.1 | 1,493 | 346 | 23.2 | -13% | -23% | -11% |

Older Population Age Groups

The following table and graphs provide data for subgroups of the older population: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, and 85+ years.

Table 3. Driver Involvement in Fatal Crashes and Pedestrian Fatalities in the Older Population by Age Group, 2003

| | Age Group (years) | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|--------------|
| | 70-74 | 75-79 | 80-84 | 85+ | Total |
| Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes | 1,506 | 1,351 | 1,117 | 826 | 4,800 |
| Pedestrian Fatalities | 189 | 219 | 201 | 164 | 773 |

Figure 3. Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatality Rates in the Older Population by Age Group, 1993-2003

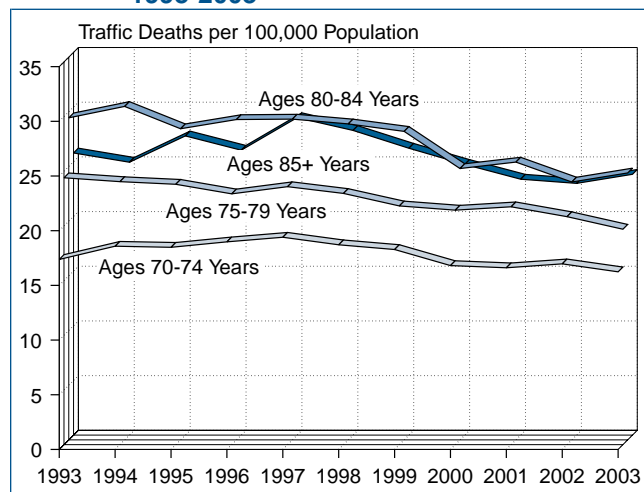
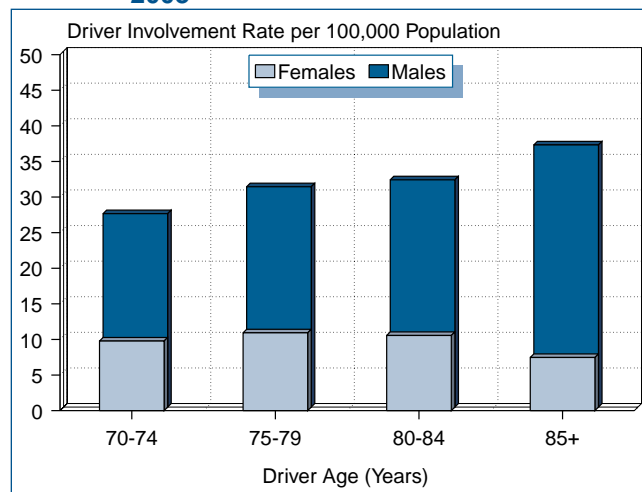


Figure 4. Involvement Rates for Older Drivers in Fatal Crashes by Age Group and Sex, 2003



For more information:

Information on the older population is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-101, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand at 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

Other fact sheets available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis are *Overview, Alcohol, Occupant Protection, Speeding, Children, Young Drivers, Pedestrians, Pedalcyclists, Motorcycles, Large Trucks, School Transportation-Related Crashes, State Traffic Data, and State Alcohol Estimates*. Detailed data on motor vehicle traffic crashes are published annually in *Traffic Safety Facts: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System*.